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ABSTRACT

A study examined whether junior high remedial reading students could be trained to use a prewriting schema development strategy called "story impressions" to develop schema and engage the reader in active reading of the text in order to improve comprehension of narrative material. Subjects were four classes of seventh, eighth, and ninth grade remedial reading students in a midwestern city. Two classes made up the control group (n=22) and two classes made up the experimental group (n=20). Subjects in the experimental classes received training in using story impression clues, wrote class predicted stories, heard the actual story, discussed it and compared their predicted story to the original story. At the end of 6 weeks, a survey about the process and the stories was administered to the experimental group. Students in the control group developed schema for the stories in teacher-led discussions based on the story titles. Results indicated that students whose schema were focused more on specific aspects of the stories and reinforced with writing did better than those whose schema development was based upon discussion of the title only. (Fifty-seven references are attached.) (SR)

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NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL REMEDIAL READING STUDENTS

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE STORY IMPRESSION METHOD ON NARRATIVE COMPREHENSION OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL REMEDIAL READING STUDENTS

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The purpose of this research was to determine if junior high remedial reading students could be trained to use a prewriting schema development strategy called "story impressions" to develop schema and engage the reader in active reading of the text in order to improve comprehension of narrative material. Since this method was used for four different stories over a period of six weeks, this research was also concerned with determining whether this method would increase story comprehension over a period of time.

Procedure

Subjects were four classes of seventh, eighth and ninth grade remedial reading students in a midwestern city. Two classes made up the control group (n=22) and two classes made up the experimental group (n=20).

Subjects in the experimental group received a 50 minute training session in which they were trained to use the story impression clues to write a class predicted story on the overhead projector. The students heard the actual story, discussed it and compared their predicted story to the original story. The retelling was then written as a class on the overhead projector to model how to use the story clues to guide their retelling.

The researcher returned over the next six weeks to introduce the story clues, review the process and monitor their progress. When the students had completed their story, they read it to the researcher and received the actual story to read. They then wrote retellings and completed the inference quiz. During the last session, a survey about the process and stories was administered to the experimental group.

Students in the control group were assigned four stories to read without the benefit of the "story impressions" technique. Schema was developed in an oral discussion led by the regular classroom teacher using the title of the story and questions provided by the researcher. These questions required students to speculate

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what the story would be about from the title only. They were asked to read the story to see if their predictions were correct. When finished, students wrote a retelling of the story and completed the inference quiz like the experimental group.

Results

The data were analyzed using analysis of variance with repeated measures. The Degrees of Reading Power (1983) test was used as a blocking variable to control for differences between the control and experimental groups. Students in the experimental group scored higher than the control group on the written retellings ($F = 6.93$, $p < .05$) and on the five statement inference measure ($F = 6.66$, $p < .05$).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for the Control and Experimental Group Across the Four Stories and DRP Level

GROUP	n	MEAN	STD. DEV.
Control	22	7.97	3.41
Exper	20	10.49	4.14

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for the Four Inference Measures by Group

GROUP	n	MEAN	STAND. DEV.
Control	22	2.98	1.16
Exper.	20	3.61	1.07

There was a significant main effect for the four stories over a period of time; however, this was uninterpretable because of a significant interaction of story by Degrees of Reading Power level (high and low). Story C, "All Summer in a Day," appeared to be the source of the interaction.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for the Story main effect

SOURCE	n	MEAN	STD.
Story			
A	42	3.12	1.93
B	42	3.71	.83
C	42	2.48	1.13
D	42	3.81	1.15

Conclusions

Students whose schema was focused more on specific aspects of the stories and reinforced with writing did better than those whose schema development was based upon discussion of the title only. The use of writing allows students to rehearse the reading process by using the processes of schema development, prediction and creation of meaning. The hypothesized stories created a blueprint for the story which could then be evaluated and revised as they read using new information as it became available. The prediction-revision framework allowed students to become actively involved in the reading process. Students (16 out of 21) reported in the survey that they actually did compare the real story to their predicted story as they read. Twenty-one students stated that they found the strategy facilitated their understanding of the story somewhat or very much.

Students in the experimental group might have had higher retelling scores because they had the story clues available for guiding their retellings. These clues created a schema on which the students could use to fill in the missing information using the text. Students in the control group relied on their own schema.

The apparent success of this method may be attributed to the training session. Student retellings on the successive stories were closer to the original story than to the students' hypothesized stories which seemed to indicate that it was the active reading process of comparing as they read that helped more than it was an accurate prediction of what would happen. According to Burns, Roe and Ross (1988), close reading only occurs if the hypotheses are not confirmed.

The use of written retellings may have had a facilitating effect on comprehension improvement. Koskinen, Gambrell, Kapinus and Heathington (1988) and Marshall (1983) reported that retellings focus the reader's attention on reconstructing the story as a whole through an integrated process focusing the reader's understanding upon the relevant information rather than factual recall. Students must make inferences, draw conclusions and summarize rather than merely give details. Students in the control

group may have benefited also from the use of the written retellings. Their retelling scores improved from a mean score of 6 on story A to a mean of 9 for story D.

Interest in the subject matter of the story appeared to be a major factor influencing how a student did on a story. "All Summer in a Day" seemed to be the source of the difference responsible for the interaction between story and DRP level probably because it was a science fiction story. Thirteen students indicated that they did not like the story and tended to rate that story as the most difficult. During the silent reading of the story, more students commented that they did not understand it or that they did not like science fiction stories. The story "Charles" was rated as the most liked story. Students scored highest on the retellings and the inference measure for "Charles" even though the readability level for "Charles" was 7.3 whereas the readability level for "All Summer in a Day" was 6.3. Only two students reported that "Charles" was difficult to understand and five thought it was the easiest.

Lack of knowledge about different genres of literature also appeared to affect how well students did on the retelling. Students who did not have a schema for science fiction stories tended to write shorter prestories, had more trouble using the clues correctly, and wrote with less cohesiveness than on the other stories. The retelling and inference scores were also lower for both the experimental and the control groups.

Implications

1. The story impression strategy should be considered a viable strategy for improving the comprehension of narrative text with remedial readers because it involves development of schema and prediction through writing.

2. Educators should use modeling of the reading process whenever possible. Students benefit from being shown how to make predictions, compare, revise, delete or add to these hypotheses when reading. It is also important to show students how to use these metacomprehension repair strategies when they read.

3. The use of writing before and after reading should be advocated for improving comprehension as there is evidence that the processes are similar or complementary and that writing provides for rehearsal of the reading process.

4. Teachers who teach reading as well as teachers who teach English should consider using "story clues" as an option to teacher made questions not only to develop schema but as an aid to organizing written and oral retellings. "Story clues" appear to be beneficial in getting students to think about the story in more than just literal terms.

5. "Story clues" have a variety of possibilities in reading or English classes to involve students in writing. They can be used to stimulate creative writing, aid in writing summaries, organize oral or written reports, work on sequence, and to study the author-reader relationship.

6. The use of written retellings as an option to other means of assessment of what students read should be considered. There is evidence that students have to go beyond the literal ideas of a story in order to retell it.

7. Research has shown that students comprehend better when they are generating predictions, questions and purposes rather than the teacher. This strategy requires the teacher to select the key ideas but requires the student to generate his/her own hypotheses to become actively involved in reading and writing.

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